

magnet having opposed upper and lower horizontal poles defining a MRI image volume within a gap between the poles that is open about at least three sides, the improvement comprising:

5 a movable patient transport supporting a horizontal patient bed and passing across said lower magnet pole while interjecting the patient bed into said gap so as to permit substantially adjacent patient access along a side of the patient while the patient is positioned within the MRI image volume,

10 said patient transport having a first position wholly outside of the gap, and at said first position the movable patient transport being enabled to allow movement of the bed, and

15 said patient transport having a second position in the gap and fixed with respect to the upper and lower magnet poles during an MRI imaging procedure, the patient transport being rotatable in a plane substantially parallel to the horizontal poles in any of the first position, the second position, and a plurality of positions therebetween.

19. A MRI system as in claim 18 wherein said movable patient transport comprises:

5 means for moving the patient bed in at least two dimensions with respect to said upper and lower pole pieces, while said patient transport is in said second position.

20. A method for positioning a patient for MRI using an NMR polarizing magnet with a C-shaped cross-section, said method comprising:

5 placing said patient on a movable and rotatable bed while said bed is wholly outside of the NMR polarizing magnet;

12 at least one of moving and rotating said bed in a plane substantially parallel to a floor towards said NMR polarizing magnet and into juxta-position with an open gap of the C-shaped magnet; and

10 at least one of moving and rotating said bed in the plane across a lower pole face of the magnet and into said open gap thus leaving unobstructed adjacent access to the patient along an entire patient body side while the patient is disposed

F2 within said open gap.

21. In an MRI system including an NMR polarizing magnet having opposed upper and lower horizontal poles defining an MRI image volume within a gap between the poles that is open on at least three sides, the improvement comprising:

5 a movable and rotatable patient transport supporting a horizontal patient bed, the patient support moving and rotating in a plane substantially parallel to the horizontal poles and passing across said lower pole while moving the patient bed into an imaging position in the gap, thereby permitting substantially
10 adjacent patient access along a side of the patient while the patient transport is positioned in the imaging position and the patient is positioned within the MRI image volume, and

the patient bed moving and rotating between the imaging position and a displaced position wholly outside of the upper and
15 lower poles.

22. A method for positioning a patient for MRI using an NMR polarizing magnet having opposed upper and lower horizontal poles defining an MRI image volume within an open gap between the poles that is open on at least three sides, the
5 method comprising:

at a location wholly outside of the upper and lower horizontal poles, placing said patient on a movable and rotatable bed;

moving and rotating said bed in a plane substantially parallel to the horizontal poles into juxta-position with said
10 open gap; and

continuing to move and rotate said bed into said open gap while moving and rotating said bed over a face of the lower pole, thus leaving unobstructed adjacent access to the patient
15 along an entire patient body side while the patient is disposed in said open gap.